

School Committee Meeting Minutes
Lura A. White School
September 23, 2003

Present: Donald Parker, Chairperson
Bob Prescott
Hugh Muffoletto
Gary Bourassa (left at 8:15)

Also Present: Dr. Thomas Scott, Superintendent
Sylvia Jordan, Middle School Principal
Suzanne Mahoney, Elementary Principal
Jenny Jordan-Begley, Grade 1 Teacher
Patricia Stern, Business Manager
Thomas Walsh, SPED Director
Meredith Marcinkewicz, Teacher

Meeting was called to order at 7:05 pm.

Public Participation:

As there was no public participation the meeting moved to discuss old business.

Gary Bourassa motioned to approve the minutes for September 9 and September 16, 2003. Hugh Muffoletto seconded. Motion carries.

District Goals portion of the agenda was postponed until the end of the meeting.

The transportation issues seem to be settling down. There is concern that Devens will soon be blocking off some roads in October due to a road widening project. Buses will most likely need to be detoured around the project. Also of concern was the overall time that students spend on the bus each day. Patricia Stern stated that high school students spend an average of one hour both to and from school and elementary and middle school students spend no more than 30 – 45 minutes both ways each day. Hope Ball of First Student Transportation is currently working on a report that will state the average ridership, timing and mileage of each bus on both morning and afternoon runs. This information should be available for the next School Committee meeting.

The committee members would like to look into the possibility, should money be available, that an extra bus be added. This extra bus would cost approximately \$35,000.00 and would not be available for at least 2 – 3 weeks so that First Student has enough time to configure new routes as well as hire and train a new driver. This issue will be discussed further at the next meeting.

Also with regard to transportation, several committee members had received calls about the kindergarten children being released prior to 1:45. Several parents complained that

they had to pick up their children at school as the buses brought the children home approximately 15 minutes early. Dr. Scott stated that this was a temporary situation that has been rectified.

The meeting moved on to discuss Payroll and Payables. Warrant 309 in the amount of \$163,458.37 was presented to the members. No payables warrant was available at this time as the Business Office is operating shorthanded due the departure of their payroll personnel. Patricia Stern asked for assistance in obtaining signatures should a payables warrant be available this week. Both Mr. Parker and Mr. Bourassa agreed to be available.

The meeting moved forward to discuss the MASC annual convention scheduled for November 12, 2003. Dr. Scott asked if anyone would be interested in being a delegate for that convention, noting that there is a fee associated with the convention yet no money is allotted in the budget to cover it. It was decided that a delegate will be chosen at the next meeting.

The committee was expecting a parent to be present to discuss their unhappiness with having to pick up their children in the small gym. That parent did not show but the committee expressed their satisfaction with having parents come in to the small gym to sign out their children. This makes for a much less congested lobby and driveway as well as a more secure way to dismiss the children.

Suzanne Mahoney addressed the committee about two enrichment programs that she has developed for the elementary children. Ms. Mahoney would like to start a math club that would be open to grade 3 & 4 students. This program will involve logic problems, toothpick challenges while encouraging the children to work together. This program will be run before school at a cost of \$18 per child for a 6 week session. This cost includes refreshments and materials and, due to the current shortage of space, is scheduled to begin in the winter.

A literary magazine will be developed for any grade 1-4 student who would like to submit poems or stories for publication. These items will be submitted to Ms. Mahoney who will then edit them as a "real" publishing house would do. Only "fine writing" will be published, hopefully establishing a standard of fine writing within the school. The committee asked if Ms. Mahoney might consider having some of the middle school students help in the editing process. Ms. Mahoney liked their idea and would consider it.

Mrs. Jordan-Begley spoke about the enrichment committee that she established last year with several parents, the principal and herself. The committee was able to meet once a month and determine what types of enrichment activities that would be beneficial to the students. By using funds available through the LEAP fund, money given to us each year by Bemis Corporation, Mrs. Jordan-Begley was able to establish a teacher's resource library that will be set up in the teacher's room at both LAW and SMS. She was also able to purchase several games in order to establish the very successful Game Club that was offered last year after school for grades 1-4. Mrs. Jordan-Begley mentioned that

some parents were concerned that not all children had an opportunity to participate in these programs as it was held after school and transportation was an issue. It is her wish that some of these programs be offered during the day so that all children can benefit.

Already scheduled is Channel 5's David Brown who will be visiting grade 3 on March 24. Also planned is Bobby Thomas, a one-man-show, and Catch the Science Bug, an educational science program that offers hands-on activities in the classroom. A self-accelerated computer program called Renaissance is a program that the committee would like to see offered.

Sylvia Jordan gave a run down of the enrichment programs that she is currently offering to the middle school students. Only those children who participate in IEP's may not be receiving the full benefit from these programs. Mrs. Jordan has set up enrichment blocks that are built into the students' schedules and are offered on 5-6 week rotations. Some examples of the programs being offered are Math & Science Enrichment, Current Events, Destination Imagination, Creative Writing, Screen Writing, Career Explorations as well as Spanish and Educational Technology.

LEAP programs have also been started after school. Some of these programs include chorus, drama club, cooking & crafting, yoga, strings, as well as intramural sports.

There was concern among the committee members as to how much exposure children have to subjects like Spanish and Physical Education where reinforcement is needed in order for the learning process to be effective. Also mentioned was how this enrichment program may affect those involved in IEP. Special concern is made to ensure that children receive an adequate amount of support with their IEP without missing any enrichment opportunities completely. Mrs. Jordan stated that no child, IEP students included, will miss out on the unified arts programs unless the IEP states that it would not be beneficial to the child.

After several discussions about the effectiveness of having subjects taught in short blocks of time the overall opinion was that this is a program that will have to be evaluated at the end of the school year to see how successful it truly was.

Mr. Bourassa left the meeting at 8:15p.m.

Mr. Walsh, Special Education Director, spoke of the delivery of SPED services during transition period. By keeping all of the students at LAW, classroom space was taken away from the SPED team. SPED teachers were asked to take advantage of inclusion classrooms or to possibly take their students aside within the regular classroom. At this time there is no place to effectively assess the students' progress or to begin initial evaluations. Mr. Walsh feels that the transition is negatively impacting the delivery of SPED services.

By having teacher materials stored in the trailers, both regular education and special education teachers are having difficulty teaching with the limited resources currently available to them.

Dr. Scott questioned who will be responsible for the delivery or moving of equipment, supplies and computers that have had to be stored in various locations in town due to the delay of the opening of the school. The committee would like to hire movers and not rely on volunteer efforts to move all of the equipment. The committee would also like to meet again next week with the School Building Committee and then have those members attend the School Committee meeting so that they may understand the impact that this delay is having on all parties concerned. A request will be sent out to also have a chance to tour the middle school prior to the meeting.

Concerned Parents meeting is planned for October 6, 2003.

FY03 grants received summary stated that last year the Shirley School District received \$690,960 worth of grants. This figure is used to estimate what monies may be available to the school during the next year. It was suggested that it may be beneficial that we make available to the public what grants and monies the school is applying for. This may help the public better understand how the budget is determined and potentially lead to better support within the town.

Last year a proposal was submitted by Vanetta Porth and Lonnie Ouellette to the Mass Cultural Council for a grant in the amount of \$15,000.00. We were awarded \$11,834 in grant money to be used for environmental issues. This grant was in conjunction with one previously presented from Drumlin Farm. These grants were also to be used in conjunction with a grant from the National River Watershed Association that was not awarded to the district.

School enrollment as of September 9, 2003 is 763 students; 33 from Devens and 83 school choice students. As of this time last year we had 761 students; 38 from Devens and 81 school choice students.

The District Goals have been tabled until the next meeting. A revised handout was distributed to the committee members to review.

The main goal for next weeks meeting is to pin down a definitive answer as to when the school will be open. Meredith Marcinkewicz reported on the School Building Committee meeting she attended prior to the School Committee meeting. Dr. Scott also gave a summary of the Signet/Guardian phone system difficulties. The tentative date for occupancy is October 10.

Dr. Scott informed the committee that notices were sent to staff and bus drivers of a level three sex offender. Teachers have been asked to speak with their students about safety issues.

Don Parker motioned to adjourn the meeting at 9 p.m. Hugh Muffoletto seconded.
Motion passed.